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Richard Scott, Washington correspondent of The Guardian, continues the attack against ABMs and MIRV. In the enclosed article, Scott argues that there is a "mad momentum in the inexorable upward spiral of the arms race," i.e., that the logic of each side doing what seems best for it forces the arms race ever onward and upward.

CLEVELAND

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Enclosure
Article from The Guardian of August 18, 1969

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The mad momentum in the inexorable upward spiral of the arms race is well illustrated by the development of anti-ballistic missiles and multiple warheads during the past decade.

In the early 1960s, the United States began to develop multiple warheads for its Minuteman I and Polaris missiles, also various forms of missile penetration aids. In 1964, American intelligence reported that the Russians were beginning to deploy an ABM defence around Moscow. It consisted of the huge Galosh missile; and it was believed that each of their multi-megaton warheads would be able to destroy several incoming missiles and their penetration aids. The Russians also began to erect a second defence system—the so-called Tallant system—which, the US believed, could quickly be given an ABM capability.

So Washington began to see the credibility of its own nuclear deterrent being whittled away by improved Soviet

defensive weaponry. It was decided that the American offensive missile forces needed to be strengthened. So Washington began to develop multiple independently-targeted warheads—the so-called MIRVs.

Whereas the original multiple warheads launched by a single missile fell in a cluster on and around a single target area, the new multiple warheads would be launched by a single missile flying a zig-zag course, and would be dropped off individually, like a bus dropping off passengers, at precisely predetermined points on its trajectory. Each warhead would then be guided by its own shape to its individual target. These MIRVs are to be fitted to most of the Minuteman III and Poseidon missiles.

Meanwhile, the Russians have not remained inactive. They had stopped building their Galosh ABM defences, round

Moscow before they were completed because, it is believed here, they had found the system to be ineffective; but they had made considerable progress in the development of large offensive weapons with multiple warheads. These were the now famous SS-9s, which are believed to have three warheads of five megatons each.

Improved accuracy

The Pentagon immediately branded these giant missiles as first-strike weapons, designed to destroy the US Minuteman missiles in their silos. Only these silos, it was argued, warranted a warhead of five megatons; if cities had been their target, nothing like so heavy a warhead would have been needed. And this argument was subsequently re-

inforced by the Pentagon's claim that observations of test firings of SS-9 warheads had convinced it that the three warheads had been designed to fall in the same pattern in which the Minuteman silos were arranged, about 10 miles apart.

So this Soviet development had to be countered by the US, and the answer was to deploy an ABM defence designed to protect the Minuteman sites—Safeguard ABM system which so narrowly won the approval of the Senate last week. It was decided, at the same time, to increase the offensive capability of American missiles by improving the accuracy of their MIRVs. Instead of the multiple warheads peeling off a launching missile at predetermined spots and flying on with only fair accuracy towards their separate targets,

the US began to develop multiple warheads each one of which would have its own built-in guidance system to direct it, with great accuracy on to its individual target.

The Pentagon explains why the SS-9 multiple warheads must be regarded as first-strike weapons, while their own latest model MIRVs should not be so regarded by pointing out the low megatonnage of the MIRV warhead they plan for Poseidon and Minuteman III. However, the layman might reasonably feel that the low megatonnage of the latest US MIRV was fully compensated for by its very considerable accuracy, and that it would be as effective a missile silo killer as the SS-9. But the Pentagon actually insists that its MIRVs are a stabilising factor, since they "preserve our deterrent, while not threatening theirs." No doubt Moscow says the same about its own missiles.

Mad pace of the nuclear missile race

From RICHARD SCOTT: Washington, August 17

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